



## Grid Computing Resource Center

### Excel Converts Fractions to Dates

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**I have been trying to enter numeric fractions such as 3/16 or 5/9 in Excel, but Excel converts them to dates such as March 16 and May 9. I don't want to format the cells as text. Is there a solution?**

**Mario Pineda**

Forcing the cells to text format wouldn't help, in any case. Even if you prefixed the data with a single quote ('), Excel would still treat it as a date when used in a formula. Instead, enter the fraction as a formula, for example, =3/16. Then right-click the cell and choose Format Cells. Click the Number tab, select Fraction, and choose an appropriate type, for example, "Up to two digits". Now the cell's value will display as you wish, and it will behave appropriately in formulas.

Excel has standard formats for up to three digits in the numerator and denominator. If you need longer fractions, choose a custom number format and type "# ???/???" where the number of question marks is the number of digits you need. The number sign (#) represents the integer portion of the fraction. If you don't use that, Excel will allow numerators greater than the denominator.

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